

### ***Testimony on***

### **RB 5294 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF NATUROPATHY.**

Good Morning Senators Gerrantana and Somers and Representatives Steinberg, Srinivasan and other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. For the record, my name is Omar Ibrahim, M.D. I am a board-certified Dermatologist practicing in Stamford, CT and I am the current President of the CT Dermatology Society. I am here representing the hundreds of physician members of the above-mentioned societies to strongly oppose RB 5294.

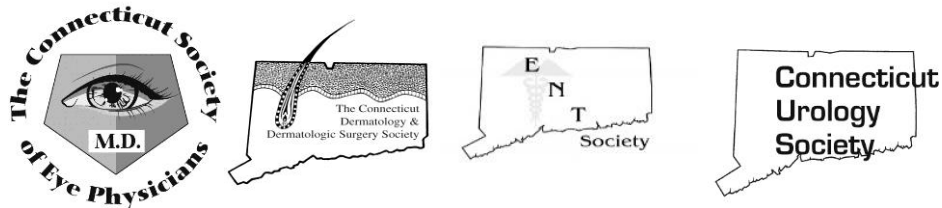
If you have a feeling of *Déjà vu*, you are not alone. Some of you will certainly recall our testimony presented in 2010, 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017 opposing similar bills for Naturopaths seeking prescriptive authority. Unfortunately, the medical community has been forced to spend time on yet another effort by naturopaths to create a back door to prescriptive authority. We will be presenting some of the same facts for your consideration (see attached fact sheet) regarding the striking contrast of training and experience between physicians and naturopaths, but we will also expose and adamantly oppose the alarming and dangerous precedent this bill would set. If passed, this bill would codify in the Connecticut General Statutes a mechanism by which professions could circumvent the time honored and trusted public hearing and legislative process.

Several years ago, the CGA, often called upon to consider legislation that would expand the scope of practice for various health care professionals, took the lead in creating a fair and inclusive Scope Review Process. Through this process, health practitioners wishing to expand their scope could request a review by the Department of Public Health (DPH). The DPH would then solicit requests from other health care professionals to participate in the process, allowing an exchange of ideas and a vetting of the request for scope expansion before proceeding to the legislature. With a vetted request, legislation would often be introduced and undergo a public hearing under the auspices of the Public Health Committee. In recent years, many members of our organizations spent many valuable hours serving on about 12 Scope Review Committees, including the APRN review which resulted in independent practice for some APRNs.

When the previous requests by Naturopaths for prescriptive authority were reviewed through the Scope Review Process, many hours were spent reviewing the education, training and clinical hours of the inconsistent Naturopathic training. The repetitive conclusions: it was not in the public interest to allow Naturopaths prescriptive authority. This opinion was reinforced by a recent article in Consumer Reports that warns against seeing a naturopath without coordinating treatment with a Medical Doctor. In addition to an inadequate level of training for naturopaths, many of those who choose to go to a Naturopath do so for alternative health treatments and not for the prescription of traditional pharmaceuticals. This is confirmed by the University of Bridgeport's Naturopathic Program which advertises to prospective students a "non-Rx approach" for their training program and their profession.

It seems there may be something of an identity crisis within the profession.

This legislation proposes that the DPH in consultation with the Connecticut Board of Naturopathic



Examiners “may establish educational and examination requirements or other qualifications to permit a naturopath to prescribe, dispense and administer medicines....” This is in stark and dangerous contrast to the Scope Review Process that invites participation by other health care professionals. Surely the Connecticut Board of Medical Examiners, Board of Pharmacology, the Connecticut State Medical Society and the Connecticut Nurses Association, to name only a few, could provide valuable guidance and input.

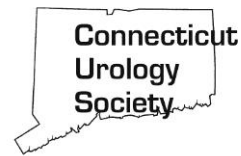
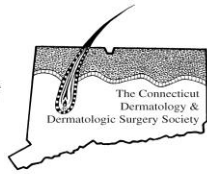
This proposed approach seems a bit like asking a fox to prescribe exactly how it would like the hen house stocked before its arrival.

There are many health care professions who have completed the rigorous didactic and practical training to achieve prescriptive authority. There is no substitute for the hundreds of hours of didactic lectures in pharmacology and thousands of hours in clinical rotations these students complete just to receive their diplomas. But this only lays the foundation. Post graduate training on the nuances of clinical pharmacology in internships, residencies and fellowships, all under the watchful eyes of experienced prescribers and care givers, ensures that this knowledge becomes part of their DNA. Other approaches that consist of limited hours or even weekend courses simply cannot ensure the safety of our patients.

To understand the risk of improper use of medications, intended to provide comfort and healing, but instead become a nightmare, one need only learn the lesson of the opioid crisis. Thousands of patients have lost their lives and countless more have been destroyed by this scourge on society.

It is particularly distressing that Naturopaths have never reconsidered their position that they seek unfettered prescriptive authority with continued requests to prescribe controlled substances, including opioids. This seems to be a lost opportunity to approach pain management with alternative medications and treatments.

In conclusion, this bill is wrong in both its intent and its proposed execution. The ability of professions to perform an “end run” to achieve their desire for expanded scope of practice will place patients at risk and erode our well delineated and accepted process. The Connecticut General Assembly should not open this door to those who are not satisfied with their career choice. It is the wrong goal and the wrong approach. And there is simply no need for this – Connecticut is a small state with thousands of well-trained professionals with prescriptive authority. A collaborative approach would be far more useful and would best utilize the strengths of all health care professionals.



## Some Facts about Naturopaths and their Training

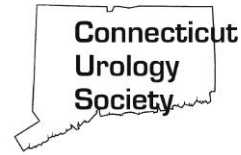
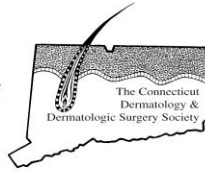
- Naturopaths are not trained in the proper use of potentially harmful pharmaceuticals, despite what some of their leadership in CT are saying. This training which transcends more than just several intense hours of studying from a book needs application which can only be done in residency programs under the watchful eye of a current prescribing provider.
- In medical school, at least 240 hours of purely didactic learning is required in Pharmacology. Contrast that to about 72 hours during doctorate programs for naturopaths.
- But these hours pale in comparison to the extensive hands-on real world training the MD/DO's receive over the course of medical school, post graduate internships and **lengthy residency training**.
- Only through such supervised experience can practitioners identify and treat side effects and adverse reactions.
- Patient safety must come first, and absolutely nothing can compare to the extensive real world training received by MD/DO's.
- Residents of Connecticut seeking health services deserve the security of knowing that their provider has been adequately trained prior to being allowed to provide care and prescribe prescription medicines.
- Historically, the legislature has found it prudent to assess the effects of significant policy changes before charging further down the path. We urge similar prudence in this case as well, and ask you to oppose bills that seek inappropriate and premature demand for even more privileges.

### Consider this:

Even the University of Bridgeport Naturopathic Program advertises to potential students a "non-RX approach" for their program and profession. Their traditions are **steeped in traditional healing practices, naturopathic medicine emphasizes holistic, preventive care. By focusing on prevention, optimal health and wellness, and diet and lifestyle as first-line interventions, naturopathic physicians educate and empower patients to take responsibility for their health.**

- Recent article by consumer reports warns against seeing a Naturopath without coordinating treatment with a medical doctor.

**<http://www.wsaw.com/content/news/Consumer-Reports-Should-you-see-an-Naturopathic-doctor-474663943.html>**



# From the University of Bridgeport- Naturopathy School

## The 21st Century Physician

There has never been a more exciting time to become a naturopathic physician. With increasing recognition that preventive care is essential to good medicine, naturopathic physicians are a natural fit for healthcare delivery that is sustainable, cost-effective, and effective.

**The University of Bridgeport College of Naturopathic Medicine is committed to training physicians for the 21st century: doctors who are leaders in the emerging paradigm of healthcare, blending research and innovative technologies with the art of healing and natural therapeutics to provide patient-centered care.**

In an intimate setting of small class size and experienced faculty, students are challenged to bridge tradition with innovation while being mentored to explore the healer they are becoming. Come to UB and discover the 21st Century Physician you will become!

### Principles and Practice

**Steeped in traditional healing practices, naturopathic medicine emphasizes holistic, preventive care. By focusing on prevention, optimal health and wellness, and diet and lifestyle as first-line interventions, naturopathic physicians educate and empower patients to take responsibility for their health.**

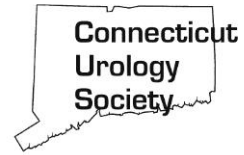
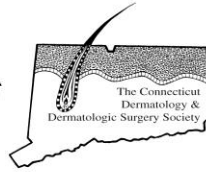
As a naturopathic physician and graduate of UBCNM, you will not only help people optimize their health, you will change the way they think about health – for themselves, their families, and the planet.

### Program Overview

Since 2001, the College of Naturopathic Medicine has been graduating physicians who are revolutionizing healthcare in the Northeast and across the country.

Our curriculum combines traditional biomedical sciences with the latest developments in genomics and molecular biology to deepen your understanding of health, disease, and therapeutics. A semester format of 18-week sessions allows you to immerse yourself in the material and take the time to fully integrate concepts.

You will benefit from course content that is integrated across the curriculum and reinforced with case studies for in-depth understanding of the application to clinical practice. Throughout your four years of



study, you will learn and practice natural therapeutics, applying them to patient care under the guidance and supervision of experienced naturopathic physicians.